

Epistolary entanglements of love and politics: reading Rosa Luxemburg's letters

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Abstract: In this chapter I look into epistolary narratives of women political theorists and activists and explore links between politics as action and love as an existential force. My discussion is framed within Hannah Arendt's conceptualization of narratives within the political and draws on my research with Rosa Luxemburg's letters to her comrade and lover Leo Jogiches. While I emphasise the importance of epistolary narratives in carrying traces of Luxemburg's political and amorous discourse, I also point to the limitations of working with edited and translated collections of letters. What I argue is that letters as political narratives are crucial in enacting plurality and communication and that Luxemburg's letters to her lover and comrade intensify rather than obscure the force of the political in re-imagining the future.

'No, I can't work any more. I can't stop thinking of you. I must write to you.'¹ This is the opening phrase of a love letter that starts agonistically: the urge to write to the beloved is posited as a dire need. The thought of the lover is juxtaposed to the imperative of work, but the latter, important as it is, seems to recede. After all the letter writer is Rosa Luxemburg, a revolutionary a Marxist, a leading figure of the socialist movement of her times, but also a woman in love. Luxemburg has been a controversial figure for many reasons and on many grounds.² But for many of us, who came of age in the wake of the European social movements of the 70s, 'when hopes were green [and] the revolution around the corner' (Arendt, 1968:37), Luxemburg was mostly an inspiring figure, a living example of the strength of politics not just in changing the world but also and perhaps more importantly in revolutionising the ways we lived and the ways we loved.

But what is the meaning of love and how is it related to politics and narratives? These are some of the questions that I want to explore in this chapter by following lines of Luxemburg's letters to her lover and comrade Leo Jogiches. Despite their personal character, Luxemburg's letters to Jogiches are political narratives par excellence; and yet it took years for these letters to be read and recognised as such. Luxemburg was demonised after her murder both by her former socialist comrades as well as by the black forces that dominated the European political terrain in the interwar and postwar periods. But while the anti-Luxemburg campaign was in full swing the publication of her prison letters

created 'an event' that was to break the silence and oblivion that had followed her murder (Cedar and Cedar, 1923). Arendt has argued that the poetic beauty of these letters was catalytic in destroying 'the propaganda image of bloodthirsty *Red Rosa*' (1968: 36). But these letters also gave rise to a similarly problematic discourse of Luxemburg as 'a bird-watcher and lover of flowers, a woman whose guards said good-bye to her with tears in their eyes when she left prison' (1968: 36-37). This is the nature of political narratives after all: they are always in an agonistic relation with their times, they always carry ambiguous meanings and set in motion effects that can never be predicted or controlled. Reading political narratives thus involves an understanding of their conditions of possibility, which is what I want to do next by looking at biographical traces of the Luxemburg-Jogiches relationship, 'one of the great and tragic love stories of Socialism' according to her biographer (Nettl, cited in Arendt, 1968: 45).

Luxemburg was twenty years old when she met Jogiches in Zurich in 1890 and he was three years older than her. They had fled their birth countries, Poland and Lithuania respectively—both under Russian rule at the time—and were heavily involved in socialist politics. There were strong links but also significant differences between them. Apart from being young, Jewish, exiled from their countries and working in the same political circles,³ they were also both studying at the University of Zurich between 1890 and 1897. Luxemburg published her doctoral thesis *The Industrial Development of Poland* in 1898, but Jogiches never completed his own, despite Luxemburg's fervent endeavours to persuade him to do so. On top of being a tireless political activist, Luxemburg was an inspiring theorist and an eloquent writer; but she would always send her speeches, essays and books to Jogiches whose judgement she would trust in evaluating both her theoretical and political ideas and writings: 'you don't know that everything I do is with you in mind. Always when I write an article, my first thought is you'll be thrilled by it'⁴ she wrote on 6 March 1899 from Berlin.

Jogiches was not just a critical reader but also an excellent political organizer; coming from a wealthy family he was also a constant source of funding both for 'the cause' and the relationship. Although they stayed together for fifteen years, Luxemburg and Jogiches only spent short times living together and even when they did, they never really cohabited, keeping different albeit neighbouring apartments where they could avoid social criticism, but also work in peace. In this light, their letters, like all letters, were bridges between presence and absence, filling the gaps of a long distance relationship, but also opening up channels of communication that sustained political action in concert. '...during the Schippel campaign your letters stimulated my thinking day by day'⁵ Luxemburg wrote to Jogiches from Berlin on her birthday, 6 March, 1899. Her birthday present was a book and she was thrilled about it: 'you can't imagine how happy your present made me. Rodbertus is my *favorite* economist. I can read him over and over again for sheer intellectual pleasure. I

feel it's not a book I got but an estate, a house or a piece of land.'⁶ Politics and love are thus intertwined in their real and epistolary relationship; what also emerges from these letters is the frustration of not living together:

I felt happiest about the part of your letter in which you wrote that we are both still young and able to arrange our personal life. Oh, Dyodyo, my golden one, if only you keep your promise! ... Our own small apartment, our own nice furniture, our own library; quiet and regular work, walks together, an opera from time to time, a small, very small, circle of friends who can sometimes be invited for dinner; every year a summer vacation in the country, one month with absolutely no work! ... And perhaps even a little, a very little baby? Will this never be allowed? Never?⁷

There is a range of very interesting themes in the above epistolary extract, which I will discuss later in the chapter. What I want to highlight here is the forceful way that the letter above portrays a relationship bursting with tensions, not just in terms of the political struggles Luxemburg and Jogiches were actively involved in, but also in terms of different life orientations that went on till the very end, 1907 when they finally broke up, although their political relationship continued till the end of their lives. In 1914 they established an underground political organization, *The Spartakus Lead*, wrote articles and organized activities against the war. While Luxemburg was in prison between 1915 and 1918, Jogiches looked after her 'and was constantly at her side.' (Ettinger, 1987: 191) After the crash of the Spartakist Rising in Berlin and Luxemburg's murder in January 1919, Jogiches ignored warnings and stayed on determined to reveal the crime of the Freicorps forces; he was murdered three months later in March 1919.

Luxemburg's ur-epistolaria: Lost in Translation?

Having outlined a rough sketch of the historical and socio-political milieu of the Luxembourg-Jogiches correspondence, I now want to look into the methodological limitations of its narrative analysis, which draws on Elżbieta Ettinger's (1979) edited and translated collection of Luxemburg's letters. There are two issues to be considered here: first the limitations of an edited publication where 'the selection of some letters entails the deselection of many more' (Stanley, 2004: 205); and second the thorny issue of being 'lost in translation' (Hoffman, 1998). Careful and attentive as it is, Ettinger's collection is the inevitable effect of certain editorial decisions since it only includes a hundred and three letters out of the one thousand extant letters from Luxemburg to Jogiches, published in Polish in three volumes. To make things worse, Jogiches' letters to Luxemburg have not been preserved or found, so in any case it is only one side of the correspondence that any analysis can draw upon.⁸

Without downplaying this important limitation in analysing Luxemburg's letters, which have been translated and published in English, I have to note that 'wholeness' is never achievable even when working with unpublished archival documents. 'You find nothing in the Archive but stories caught half way through: the middle of things: discontinuities', Carolyn Steedman has influentially written (2001: 45). In this light the letter that was kept in the archive, should always be read with the letter that was lost or destroyed in mind and in the same way that we interpret voices, we should perhaps start interpreting silences or somehow include them in our archives. Liz Stanley has further proposed the notion of the 'epistolarium' to address questions around the already, always 'incomplete state' of different collections of letters and correspondences. In Stanley's configuration there are three ways that an epistolarium can be defined: 'as as an epistolary record that remains for *post hoc* scrutiny; as "a collection" of the entirety of the surviving correspondences that a particular letter writer was involved in; and as the 'ur-letters' produced in transcribing, editing and publishing actual letters (or rather versions of them).' (2004: 218) Clearly, it is Luxemburg's 'ur-letters' that this chapter is dealing with.

As already noted above, the problem of translation is the second serious limitation of this chapter, since as Ettinger carefully notes 'the Polish language of love with its wealth of tender, intimate words, and the possibility of creating words, inimitable words, private, yet understandable to an outsider, cannot be adequately translated into English' (1979: ix). Indeed the problem of translation poses significant challenges to the whole field of narrative research and there is a growing body of literature and scholarship activity addressing these issues.⁹ Amongst the many interesting themes that this burgeoning body of scholarship has revolved around, I will take up the notion of 'the author's function' that Foucault (1998) has most influentially theorised, namely the way the status of the author creates entanglements of power/knowledge discourses and practices that condition the reception of his/her work. What I want to suggest in this light is that Luxemburg's letters are always, already read in the discursive context of her political and scientific writings: the readers of her letters are more likely to be informed by the controversial discourses surrounding her theories about capitalism and the revolution than by the translator's recontextualisation practices. As Annelies Laschitzka has pithily noted in the introduction of the German edition of Luxemburg's letters: 'the process by which the letters were tracked down, gathered together, and published is a turbulent and eventful story in its own right.' (Adler, Hudis and Laschitzka, 2011: xxii) What Foucault theorised then as 'the author's function' can here be extended to 'the editors' function'; indeed the publication, translation and interpretation of Luxemburg's letters need to be considered in the light of a sociology of publishing, translating and interpreting, a field that has been greatly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's (1994) insights in the social conditions of the international circulation of cultural goods.

What should further be considered vis-à-vis Luxemburg's edited letters is the fact that Ettinger is not just a critical translator, but also Luxemburg's biographer, whose feminist interpretation of Luxemburg's life (1986) has created its own circle of turbulence around the validity of personal and intimate details in the writing of political and intellectual biographies. As the historian of the Second International, James Joll put it in his review of Ettinger's biography: 'it is both pathetic and ironic to see the famous Marxist revolutionary writing to her love, "I've two vases with violets on the table and a pink lampshade ... and new gloves, and a new hairbrush and I am pretty." ' (cited in Dabakis, 1988: 20). Ettinger has thus been criticised for allowing 'a rosy' or maybe 'violet' Rosa to emerge, a vulnerable woman who liked pink lampshades and wanted 'a little baby', while writing and fighting for the revolution. In the same vein of rejecting the personal as insignificant to the political Stephen Bronner, Professor of Political Science at Rutgers, has introduced his volume of Luxemburg's letters noting that: 'choosing the letters was no easy task ... much of Luxemburg's correspondence is purely personal in character or concerns itself with the details of everyday life and the petty infighting of party politics; these letters I also chose to exclude'. (1993: x) In thus editing Luxemburg's letters, Bronner chose to exclude what would be most interesting for a narrative analyst: narratives of everyday life in their forceful interrelation with the master political narratives of their times. Why is that? It is in the minutiae of personal narratives that the political is fleshed out and enacted, while theoretical ideas are grounded and become specific. As Arendt has aptly put it: 'I have always believed that, no matter how abstract our theories may sound or how consistent our arguments appear, there are incidents and stories behind them, which [...] contain as in a nutshell the full meaning of whatever we have to say.' (1960: 1)

What I have tried to show so far is that the problem of translation is always complicated and embedded in material and discursive situations that have to be considered in relation to a specific research problem. In this light, the restrictions of translation notwithstanding, my analysis is not placed in the field of literary criticism and it is not so much focused on the form of Luxemburg's letters but rather on the discourses, power relations and forces of desire that traverse the themes that I analyse. In presenting and discussing some of the epistemological limitations in the analysis of political narratives in general and Luxemburg's letters in particular, I still think that Luxemburg's edited and translated letters constitute a rich 'narrative assemblage'.¹⁰ Seen as an assemblage, Luxemburg's edited and translated letters illuminate and concretize intrinsic and subtle relations between politics and love within the web of human relations. Rethinking these relations in the light of possibilities for communication that letter writing enacts is a relatively neglected area, which I will further discuss in the final section of this chapter. What I want to do now is to look into the Arendt/Luxemburg encounter in the light of love as an existential concept linked to memory, natality and plurality.

Love, Memory, Politics

There were only two women amongst eight men in Arendt's (1968) influential work *Men in Dark Times*: the legendary storyteller, Isak Dinesen and the revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg. In the preface of this influential work, Arendt has clearly explained her choice of the lives included in this collection:

That even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth—this conviction is the inarticulate background against which these profiles were drawn. (Arendt, 1968: ix)

Arendt thus chose Luxemburg as a woman whose life illuminated 'dark times'. Apart from reading Luxemburg's theoretical work, Arendt had admired the poetry and lyricism of her letters, but she had also developed visceral connections with Luxemburg, who was her mother's heroine according to her biographer. (Young-Bruehl, 1982: 239) As the latter notes, Arendt was eleven years old 'when her mother took her to the Königsberg demonstrations in support of the Spartacists' (124). What she did not know at the time was that her future husband Heinrich Blücher—twenty years old at the time—was amongst the young Spartacists marching against the First World War in Berlin. (125)

Arendt had thus heard many anecdotes about Luxembourg not only through the social democratic circles that her mother was involved in, but also later in life from Blücher himself, who had read and admired Luxemburg's political writings. In thus reflecting upon the light of Luxemburg's life, Arendt has particularly considered and discussed her relationship with Jogiches, 'a man of action and passion [who] knew how to do and how to suffer.' (45) As Young-Bruehl has noted, in discussing both the amorous and the political part of the Luxemburg-Jogiches relationship, Arendt was somehow reflecting on her own experiences. When she wrote that 'in marriage it is not always easy to tell the partners' (1968: 46) thoughts apart, Arendt inevitably drew upon her own intellectual and marital relationship with Blücher;¹¹ when she commented that 'this generation still believed firmly that love strikes only once' (45) she must have had her mother's generation in mind.

Love was indeed at the heart of Arendt's interest, the topic of her doctoral thesis having been the concept of love in St Augustine's thought (Arendt, 1996), while Rachel Varnhagen's life (Arendt, 2000), the topic of her habilitation, particularly considered and discussed Varnhagen's failure in

‘matters of love’. But why was love so important in the thought of such a distinguished political theorist? Leaving aside Arendt’s personal ties with Martin Heidegger,¹² I want to examine here love as a crucial concept in her existential philosophy and her political theories.

Arendt’s thesis ‘Love and St Augustine’ was her last book-length manuscript to be published in English in 1996. This publication came twenty-one years after her death, although a synopsis of the dissertation in English was included as an appendix of Young-Bruehl’s intellectual biography, *Hannah Arendt, For Love of the World* in 1982. The thesis was first translated in English by E.B. Ashton in 1960 and although Arendt worked on the draft translation with a publication in mind, the idea was put on hold in 1965 as she was involved in other projects. Although never realised, what Arendt’s editorial intention indicates according to the editors of the posthumous publication, is that her thesis on Augustine remained central in the development of her political theories and that there should be no separation between the early writer of a philosophical thesis on love and the political writings of her maturity. ‘The return to Augustine directly infused her revisions of the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, her new study *On Revolution*, the essays collected in *Between Past and Future* and *Eichman in Jerusalem* with explicit and implicit Augustinian references.’ (Scott and Stark, 1996: x)

Moreover Augustine’s thought is critical in how Arendt (1978) develops her section on ‘the faculty of the Will and by implication to the problem of Freedom’ (1978: 3) in her posthumously published work *The Life of the Mind*. Love in Arendt’s configuration binds together the three faculties of the mind, namely thinking, willing and judging. As Young-Bruehl has noted, we think since we love meaning and the search for truth, we will the pleasure that the continuation of things can offer and we judge within the disinterested love that the image of the beautiful can offer us. In referring to the ‘disinterested love’ Arendt drew on Kant’s notion of the ‘enlarged mentality’: ‘an image of judging as a disinterested love ... put together with the image of thinking as an eros for meaning and the image of willing, transformed into love, willing objects to continue *being*.’ (Young-Bruehl, 1994: 356, emphasis in the text) But this recurrence of love as a concept binding the three faculties of the mind derives from the emergence of love as an effect of the Augustinian journey of memory, which I will now discuss.

In the quest of meaning for ourselves and our relationship to the world, the future cannot offer us any hope since it is directed to death a certain point that defines the temporality of human existence, as influentially theorised by Heidegger (2003). Thus, Arendt’s turn to Augustine’s philosophy of time, also marked her departure from Heidegger’s orientation to death, a rupture that she wrote explicitly about:

Since our expectations and desires are prompted by what we remember and guided by a previous knowledge, it is memory and not expectation (for instance the expectation of death as in Heidegger's approach) that gives unity and wholeness to human existence.' (Arendt, 1996: 56)

In seeking fearlessness through love, Augustine's philosophy offers a different image of time, which comes from the future and is directed towards the past, the moment of the beginning of the world, which is also related to our own beginning, namely our birth. This image of time can be humanly conceptualized through memory: 'Time exists only insofar as it can be measured, and the yardstick by which we measure it is space' (Arendt, 1996: 15). For Augustine then, memory is the space wherein we measure time, but what we can measure is only what remains fixed in memory from the 'no more' and what exists as expectation from the 'not yet'. As Arendt eloquently puts it: 'It is only by calling past and future into the presence of remembrance and expectation that time exists at all.' (ibid.)

Love is crucial in the experience of the timeless *Now*: while for Augustine it is the love for God that can make humans forget their temporal existence over eternity, forgetfulness Arendt notes 'is by no means only characteristic of the love of God.' (ibid: 28) In loving '[man] not only forgets himself, but in a way [he] ceases to be [himself], that is this particular place in time and space. [He] loses the human mode of existence, which is mortality, without exchanging for the divine mode of existence, which is eternity.' (ibid.)

By illuminating the present, the timeless space between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet', Arendt highlights *natality* as the defining aspect of human temporality and is concerned with politics as an arena where new beginnings are always possible as history has so forcefully shown: 'the essence of all, and in particular of political action is to make a new beginning' (1994: 321).

Thus, while the final destination of Augustine's memory journey is God, Arendt's chosen destination is humanity, the remembrance of what binds us together, namely our birth in the world, 'for the sake of *novitas*' (1996: 55) and therefore freedom. Having retreated from the world in the quest for meaning we thus follow an Augustinian journey of memory from the future into the past and by reaching our birth as a common experience that binds us as humans we reconcile ourselves with the world and through the experience of neighbourly love, 'as an expression of interdependence' (Arendt, 1996: 104), we reposition ourselves in-the-world-with-others. Love is thus an existential concept in Arendt's political thought that binds together the two crucial components of her philosophy: uniqueness and plurality. In the conclusion of her important essay 'What is Existential Philosophy' she famously notes:

Existence itself is by nature never isolated. It exists only in communication and in awareness of others' existence. Our fellow-men are not (as in Heidegger) an element of existence that is structurally

necessary but at the same time an impediment to the Being of Self. Just the contrary: Existence can develop only in the shared life of human beings inhabiting a given world common to them all. (1994: 186)

It was the image of 'a given world common to all' that Arendt was visualizing when she wrote Rachel Varnhagen's life; in doing this she was able to flesh out the existential concept of love through writing Varnhagen's life 'from within', reading her diaries and following her correspondence. But what does it mean 'to write from within'? Since every human being is unique in Arendt's philosophy, all lives can inspire stories that will generate meaning and trigger further action, enthusing human beings to actually live their lives as a story. In reflecting on Isak Dinesen's¹³ philosophy of storytelling, Arendt therefore asks: 'If it is true [...] that no one has a life worth thinking about whose lifestory cannot be told, does it not then follow that life could be, even ought to be, lived as a story, that what one has to do in life is to make the story come true?' (1968:105)

Arendt's idea that lives should be lived as stories is indeed a unique and strong political argument, bringing agency and the possibility of intervening in the politics of life to the fore. But here again she was very careful to clarify that living life as a story should not mean that one creates a normative pattern that has to be followed. The Arendtian imaginary of 'life as a narrative' (Kristeva, 2001) is about creating conditions of possibility that will eventually allow the story to emerge. And although everybody can or should live their life as a story, Arendt notes that 'certain people are so exposed in their own lives that they become junction points and concrete objectifications of life.' (Weissberg, 2000: 31) In this light, biographical subjects can become inspiring examples that move beyond their actuality and transcend their historicity. It is therefore the responsibility of the biographer to write about a life, creating forceful connections between life histories and the discourse of history. As Weissberg has commented, 'biography reflects on an individual life, but this life becomes public for history.' (18) This is how 'writing from within' becomes Arendt's biographical mode. By following Varnhagen's letters and diaries Arendt could participate in her biographical subject's actions and thoughts without the need to psychologize her. In thus writing Varnhagen's biography, Arendt looked at the shape of a life that had been completed and responded to it with intellectual rigour and unbounded passion: as her biographical subject, Varnhagen would ultimately become for Arendt, 'my closest friend, though she has been dead for some hundred years.' (in Weissberg 2000: 5) It is this biographical mode of 'writing from within' that brings the discussion back to Luxemburg's letters and the possibilities they open up for love and politics to be theorized in concert.

Dear Dyodyo

[...] Dyodyo, if only you'd settle your citizenship, finish your doctorate, live with me openly in our own home. We will both work and our life will be perfect!! [...]we will be happy, we must. Weren't we happy when just the two of us lived and worked together? [...] Remember when we are alone in harmony, we can do without the whole world? ... Remember, last time in Weggis when I was writing 'Step by Step' [...] I was sick writing in bed, all upset, and you were so gentle, so good, sweet. [...] I will never forget it. Or do you remember the afternoons at Melida, after lunch, when you sat on the porch, drinking black thick coffee [...] Or do you remember, how once a band of musicians came on a Sunday to the garden [...] and we went on foot to Maroggia and we came back on foot, and the moon was rising[...] and we had just been talking about my going to Germany. We stopped, held each other on the road in the darkness and looked at the crescent moon over the mountains. Do you remember? I still smell the night's air [...] Or, do you remember how you used to come back from Lugano at 8:20 at night, with the groceries [...] then I unpacked them and put the oranges, the cheese, salami, the cake on the table. Oh, you know, we have probably never had such magnificent dinners as those, on the little table in that bare room, the door to the porch open, the fragrance of the garden sweeping in [...] And from afar in the darkness the train to Milan was flying over the bridge [...]

Dyodyo dearest [...] I don't want to write about business today—tomorrow, after seeing Kautsky [...]

Yours Roza.¹⁴

Amongst the many things that struck me in reading Luxemburg's letter above is the recurrence of the 'do you remember' question. Written on the day of her birthday, the reiteration of the need to remember in the author's epistolary discourse becomes particularly significant in the light of Arendt's existential concept of love and its link to memory, natality and politics as discussed in the previous section. It is by recalling past [and scarce] moments of living together with the beloved—who is also a comrade and a political mentor—that Luxemburg's amorous discourse unfolds. What is further important is that memories of the crescent moon, the train passing by in the darkness, simple dinners in the Italian countryside and worries about Kautsky's reception of her work, the ordinary and the extraordinary, are crammed together in the bodies of these letters.

In discussing the discourse of remembrance in amorous epistolary narratives, Linda Kauffmann (1986: 17) has noted that retrieving past moments of happiness in the text of the letter is an amorous epistolary practice that goes back to Ovid's *Heroids*. But while the Ovidean heroine writes to the beloved recalling past moments of happiness—since writing is the only act that can revert the position of 'the deserted woman'—there is a significant inflection in Luxemburg's epistolary practices: the memory of blissful moments of being

goes hand in hand with the memory of political creation and action: the period when she was writing ‘the little masterpiece’ *Step by Step* or working with *The Administrative Theory Notes*. Luxemburg is not ‘a deserted woman’—although sometimes she feels so by Jogiches’ indifference—but a political actor, who wants to change the world not just on the macro level but also in the minutiae of everyday life. In this light she actively seeks and claims the pleasure and right of being happy: ‘we will be happy, we must’, she notes emphatically in the birthday letter above.

But for Luxemburg the often controversial and ambiguous image of ‘a happy life’ is interwoven in the web of political relations in a mutual co-dependence. A ‘happy life’ for Luxemburg is about loving, studying, writing, acting; as a revolutionary she wants them all and she wants them in the *Now* that she reflects upon and wills to revolutionize and radically change. In tracing signs of the author’s expression of a forceful will, the reader of these letters cannot but make connections with Arendt’s configuration of love as an existential force that binds together thinking, willing and judging in Luxemburg’s ‘life of the mind’. Luxemburg’s *Now* is Arendt’s timeless present, a site of struggle, but also a region par excellence for thinking and remembering: ‘The gap between past and future opens only in reflection [which] draws these absent “regions” into the mind’s presence; from that perspective the activity of thinking can be understood as a fight against time itself.’ (1978: 206)

Luxemburg’s letters I argue open up possibilities of communication about politics, the revolution and the lovers’ life in a future that is radical and open. In this light the unbearable heaviness of being separated from the beloved was not just a contingency of the amorous relationship; while visualizing a different world, Luxemburg was specifically situating her life within it. Her letters to Jogiches are thus creating tangible links between the particular and the universal. In reflecting upon the unhappiness of her own life, she was departing from the abstractness of political discourse. Although accepting the fragmentation of the world, through her letters, Luxemburg was attempting ‘to accommodate the modern sense of alienation in the world and the modern desire to create, in a world that is no longer a home to us, a human world that could become our home.’ (Arendt, 194: 186) In doing this Luxemburg was continuously confronted with different ideas and perspectives: not just those of the social democratic circles she was refuting and in which she was acting in concert with Jogiches, but also with those of the beloved. Her letters to Jogiches stage a scene of an on-going struggle of ideas and perspectives—not so much about politics but mostly about love-in-politics—that would remain open till the very end.

Love, letters and agonistic politics

In this chapter I have argued that Luxemburg's letters to her lover and comrade Jogiches create an interesting archive wherein the epistolary form dramatizes and gives specificity to the relationship between politics and love. Luxemburg's letters have been read as political narratives: tangible traces of the contingency of action and the unpredictability of the human condition, constitutive of politics and of the discourse of History. In acting and speaking together, human beings expose themselves to each other, reveal the uniqueness of *who* they are and through taking the risk of disclosure, they connect with others. In this light narration creates conditions of possibility for uniqueness, plurality and communication to be enacted within the Arendtian configuration of the political. Love as an effect of the journey of memory and as a force of life is crucial here: through love we reconnect with the moment of our beginning, thus becoming existentially aware of freedom as an inherent possibility of the human condition.

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¹ Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, July 16th, 1897, (in Ettinger, 1979: 22)

² Rosa Luxemburg's life has been the topic of two main biographies and several biographical sketches. See amongst others, Nettl 1966, Ettinger 1982. For an interesting discussion of the battleground around Luxembourg's political and theoretical work see Arendt 1993.

³ In 1893, Luxemburg and Jogiches founded together the first influential Polish Marxist workers' party, the *Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland* (SDKP),

which was reorganized in 1900 as the *Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania* (SDKPiL). See Ettinger 1979: 2-3, 195-196.

⁴ Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, (in Ettinger, 1979: 71).

⁵ Ettinger, 1979: 72.

⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

⁷ Ibid., 73-74.

⁸ I have also studied the following collections of Luxemburg's letters: Bronner 1993, Paul 1923 and Adler, Hudis and Laschitzka 2011, but for the sake of consistency in the problem of the translation I have only quoted from Ettinger's collection (1979).

⁹ See Hoffman's classic *Lost in Translation*. (1998) See also, Temple 2008 for an excellent overview of questions and issues around translation in narrative research.

¹⁰ This a notion that I have used in my work to denote multifarious and disorderly collections of storylines that are put together by the researcher in the process of creating an archive of the problem s/he is investigating. (see Tamboukou, 2010)

¹¹ See Young-Bruehl, 1982: 135.

¹² See Young-Bruehl 1982 and Ettinger 1995.

¹³ Isak Dinesen was the male pseudonym of Karen Blixen. See Arendt 1968: 95-109.

¹⁴ Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, (in Ettinger 1979: 73-75).